



# SPECIAL EDUCATION

**What Families Need to Know**

# VASD EDUCATIONAL EQUITY STATEMENT

**In the Verona Area School District, our mission is that each student will acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their personal goals, thrive in a diverse global society, and lead a healthy, self-fulfilling life. To meet this mission, the Verona Area School District will ensure that every individual has access to the educational, social, and emotional support they need to feel valued and affirmed in their unique identities and experiences. We acknowledge that inequities and power dynamics exist in our system such that some individuals, on the basis of their identities\*, face barriers to accessing the opportunities they need to experience success. In acknowledgment of such, the Verona Area School District is committed to disrupting these systems of inequity. [VASD Equity Framework](#)**



# MARCO DE EQUIDAD EDUCATIVA DE VASD

*La misión del Distrito Escolar del Área de Verona es que cada estudiante adquiera las destrezas y el conocimiento necesarios para conseguir sus objetivos personales, prosperar en una sociedad global diversa, y llevar una vida sana y realizada. Para lograr esta misión, el Distrito Escolar del Área de Verona se encargará de que cada individuo tenga acceso al apoyo educativo, social y emocional que necesita para sentirse valorado y afirmado en su identidad y experiencias únicas. Reconocemos que existen desigualdades y dinámicas de poder dentro del sistema, tales que algunas personas, en base a sus identidades, afrontan obstáculos para acceder a las oportunidades que necesitan para experimentar el éxito. En reconocimiento de esto, el Distrito Escolar del Área de Verona ésta comprometido al desmantelamiento de esos sistemas de inequidad. Marco de Equidad*

维罗纳学区的使命旨在帮助每一位学生都能 获得实现个人目标所需的知识和技能, 能够在全 球多元化的社会中茁壮成长, 并有能力 过上健康、自我实现的生活。为实现这一使命, 维罗纳学区将确保每一位学生都能 获得他们在教育、社交和情感方面的支持, 重 视并肯定他们特有的身份和 经历。我们认识到在我们教育系统中存在不公平以及 权利失衡的现象, 比如某些因个人身份的差异从而阻碍了他们获得成功所需的机会。我 们正是认识到这一现象, 维罗纳学区致力于打破 这些不公平制度。

**Our district-wide goal is to prepare all learners to thrive in a diverse, global society. Students and staff will utilize the power of collaboration to center disciplinary literacy across every learning environment.**





# Goals for this Session

- Understand the definition of Special Education
- Understand the evaluation process
- Understand the 5 Step Process for Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Understand terminology used in Special Education
- Have ideas on how to prepare for my child's IEP



# What is Special Education

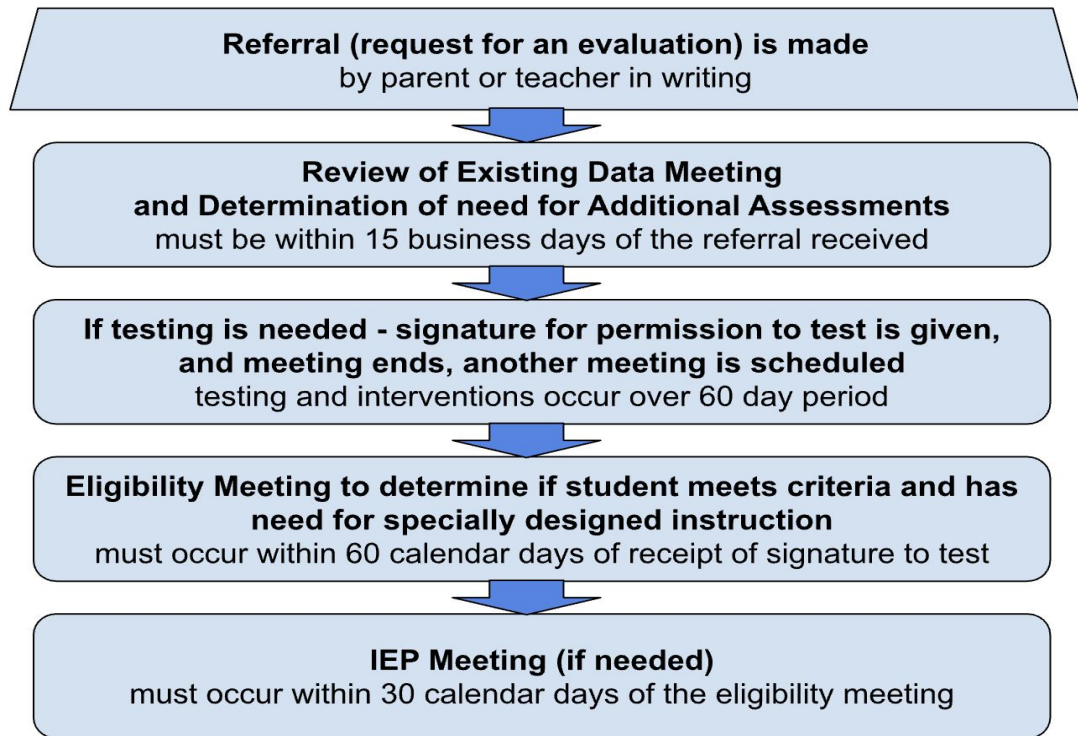
**Special Education** In Wisconsin refers to:

- Services provided to students with disabilities, aged 3 to 21, to help them meet their unique learning needs and make progress in the [Least Restrictive Environment \(LRE\)](#)
- Students with disabilities are:
  - educated alongside their typically developing peers whenever possible
  - have access to the general education curriculum and general education classroom setting
  - receive additional support including specialized instruction and related services





# Timeline – for Evaluation & IEP



- **Reevaluations need to happen every 3 years.**
- **May be requested earlier if circumstances change**

**What should  
happen prior to  
making a  
referral for  
Special  
Education?**







# Prior to Making a Referral

When there are concerns about a student's progress:

- Talk to your classroom teacher to develop strategies that support the student's learning needs
- Bring concerns to the school's Multi-Level Systems of Support (MLSS) team
  - Concerns can be shared with principal or school psychologists
- MLSS team
  - The team will review the student's progress compared to peers
  - If needed, staff will implement interventions and monitor progress
  - The team will be in communication with families and staff working with the student



# Prior to Making a Referral

Factors that may impact a student's progress but are not related to special education

- Students who are developing a new language (such as English) will take longer to acquire and progress in the academic content and skills being taught in the new language.
- Students who attend school less than 95% of the time may have a loss of instruction and gaps in academic performance
- Students who have a traumatic event, such as a change in family circumstances, can temporarily impact the student's ability to learn

# Special Education Evaluation Process





# Evaluation – Purpose

- To identify if a child has an impairment (as identified by DPI checklist for an [Impairment Area](#))

**AND**

- When compared to peers, the child has need for specialized education services that cannot be provided by the general education and support staff





# Evaluation – Referral

A written [Referral](#) to Special Education starts the [Evaluation Process](#)

- Discuss concerns with your child's teacher, principal, or school psychologist prior to making a referral to see if anything else can be tried
  - School staff may also make a referral



# Evaluation – Referral (cont.)

- Submit a [Request for 504 or Special Education Evaluation](#) which includes:
  - Student Strengths, Interests, Motivations
  - Areas of concern
  - Interventions/Strategies already tried and effects
  - Any other info families want to share – attach reports if applicable



# Evaluation Process – After Referral

- You will be contacted by a school representative, typically the school psychologist to schedule a meeting within 15 business days from the date of the referral
- Team will set up a meeting to [Review Existing Data](#) which is information that is already known about the child and to determine what gaps exist in their learning



# Evaluation Process – After Referral (cont.)

- The team will include
  - Parent/Guardian & Student is required to be invited when they are 13 and older
  - [LEA](#) (School District Rep), Regular Education Teacher, School Psychologist, Special Education Teacher
  - Depending on areas of concern, the team may also include Speech-Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Nurse, Counselor, or Social Worker
- Determine what additional information/tests are needed to determine if a child has an impairment based on [DPI checklists](#)





# Evaluation Process – Review Existing Data

- At the review of existing data meeting the following will be discussed to determine your child's performance compared to peers to see where there are gaps
  - Recent report cards, teacher assessments and general performance in classes
  - Standardized test scores
  - Attendance records
  - Medical records (with permission)
  - Any private evaluations provided by families
  - Past IEP goals and progress reports (if applicable)
  - Social emotional performance and ability to organize and complete work independently



# Evaluation Process – Review Existing Data

- As a parent, come prepared to talk about:
  - Your child's strengths and concerns in different areas
  - Share behavior and learning patterns that have worked or not worked
  - Discuss successes and challenges they face at home or school
  - Ask clarifying questions when needed
  - Advocate for your child: Don't hesitate to speak up for what you believe is best for your child's education
  - Review Eligibility for [Impairment Area\(s\)](#) and be prepared to talk about which impairment areas you are most concerned about
  - Share outside resources that you have accessed, including medical or therapy info and when those occurred (if willing to share)



## Evaluation Process – Are Additional Assessments Needed

At the end of the Review of Existing Data meeting, the team will discuss testing

- Based on information collected thus far, team will determine if more information is needed in order to answer the questions on the DPI checklist.
- A complete list assessments will be listed, along with who will be administering them, and may include:
  - Observations and Interviews
  - Rating scales
  - Standardized tests
- Once the consent is signed and received by the school team it starts the next phase of the timeline, the Assessment Phase (60 days)
- The [Eligibility Meeting](#) will occur within 60 days



# Evaluation Process – Eligibility Determination

A meeting will be held to determine if your child meets eligibility criteria for special education

- Team members will share results of testing
  - Each professional will summarize their findings and answer questions
- The team will use the testing and information shared at the meeting to discuss [eligibility areas and criteria](#)





# Evaluation Process – Eligibility Determination

(cont.)

- The team will compare your child's performance to expected skill, standards and peer performance
  - Are there significant gaps compared to peers or expected skills/standards
  - Look at what interventions or services that have already been provided and what progress/growth has been made
- If your child meets DPI eligibility criteria, then discuss need for special education services



## Evaluation Process – Determine Need for Special Education

Three questions are asked to determine if your child needs special education services

- How is the student impacted in their classroom and with their peers? This is the Effects of the Disability.
  - The team discusses gaps from peers in academic or functional skills including
    - achievement in content areas including early literacy/reading, math, writing
    - cognitive learning, communication
    - independence and self-determination
    - [social and emotional learning](#) ( e.g., mental health, anxiety, behavior)
    - physical and health



## Evaluation Process – Determine Need for Special Education (cont.)

- What does the student need to allow for equal access compared to their peers? This is Disability Related Needs.
- Can the Student's Needs be met within the regular education environment?
  - If **YES** – there is **NO** need for special education and the process ends
  - If **NO** – then there **IS** a need for Special Education and the team will schedule a meeting to write an IEP

# Special Education IEP Process





# IEP Process

If the child meets eligibility criteria and needs special education services during an evaluation, then another meeting is set within 30 days to create an IEP or if your child has an IEP, the team creates a new IEP annually



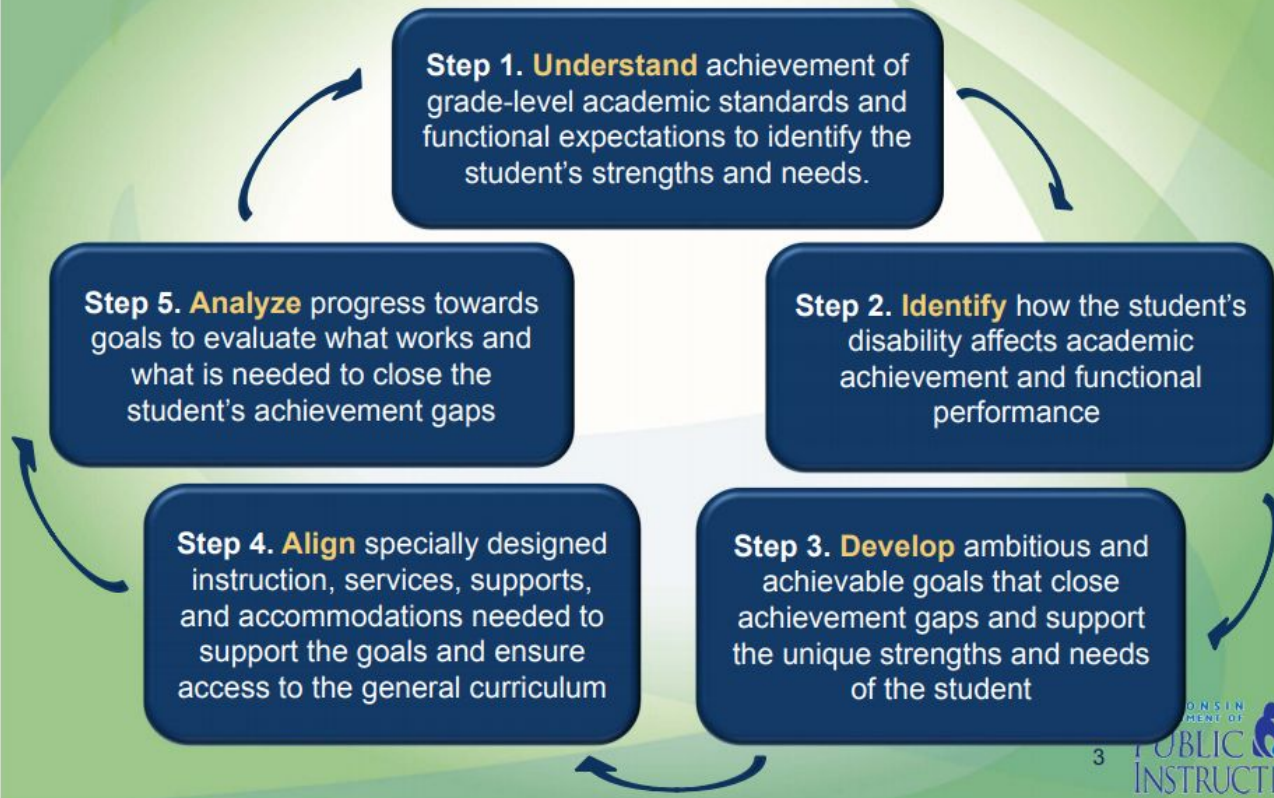
# IEP Process (cont.)

## What is an IEP?

- Individualized Educational Plans are developed to ensure that students with disabilities graduate from high school prepared for success in community life, career and /or college.
  - Focus on access, engagement, and progress in grade-level curriculum
  - Ambitious and achievable goals
  - Data-driven decision making
  - Collaboration



# College and Career Ready IEP 5 Step Process







# IEP – Parts of the IEP

- Present Level
  - Describes the students strengths, current functioning in comparison to peers and standards and/or expected performance, including any special factors such as behavior, communication, English Language, Assistive Technology, and transportation
- Effects of the Disability and Disability Related Needs
  - Outlines gaps in performance compared to peers
  - Identifies the root cause or why there are gaps in performance



## IEP – Parts of the IEP (cont.)

- Develop goals based on progress in curriculum or previous goals
  - Goals reviewed within one year of initial IEP or previous IEP
  - Team Determines area of greatest focus for upcoming year
- Determine any supplemental aids and services needed to access curriculum
  - Supports that can be provided by the general education teacher
  - Allow access to the curriculum (visual schedules, alternative seating, breaking tasks down, scaffolding)
  - Specially Designed Instruction directly addresses learning needs while supplemental aids and services support access and participation



## IEP – Parts of the IEP (cont.)

- Determine what Specially Designed Instruction is needed, how many minutes, and what location it will be provided in
  - This is instruction provided by special education staff to help close the gaps in performance
  - Services can occur in the general education classes or in a special education setting
- Determine if any Related Services may be needed to meet goals
  - Broad category of supports that are directly linked to a student's needs and/or IEP goals
  - This may include services from speech language pathology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, nursing, psychology or social work, and transportation



# Extended School Year (ESY)

Extended School Year (ESY) services are designed for students with IEPs. The purpose of ESY is to minimize the regression of skills when there is an interruption of services, such as in summer.

Extended School Year (ESY) is determined by looking at the pattern of regression during school breaks and how quickly a student is able to learn new skills and knowledge. It is a predictive analysis based on how the student has fared in the past during periods of breaks in instructional time. ESY services could also be available if a student is at a critical stage of development near the end of the school year.



# Extended School Year (ESY)<sub>(cont.)</sub>

ESY service(s) emphasize the maintenance of existing skills indicated in the current IEP. Due to the emphasis on preventing regression, ESY service(s) may differ markedly from those provided during the regular school year. ESY services are provided to maintain, not progress on goals.

The IEP team is the deciding factor in the decision to provide ESY services. The need for ESY service(s) must be determined on an annual basis and may vary from year to year for a student. ESY service(s) must be individually designed rather than determined solely by the severity and/or category of disability.



# Post Secondary Transition Plan

The Post Secondary Transition Plan (PTP) is a part of the IEP which focuses on transition. A PTP is written with the IEP team, which includes the student, when a student is 13 turning 14 during the timeframe of their IEP.

Transition planning helps students with disabilities and their families think about their life after high school. The process helps students identify long-range goals, designing the high school experience to ensure that students gain the skills and connections they need to achieve these goals after high school.



# Now that my child has an IEP...

- Who are my contacts?
  - First – contact Case Manager, who is your child's primary Special Education teacher
  - Principal
  - Assistant Director/Director of Special Education





# Now that my child has an IEP... (cont.)

- What does the Case Manager do?
  - Leads the IEP Team
  - Designs Instruction and Interventions
  - Coordinates services
  - Monitor Progress
  - Send Progress Reports as often as report card grades are sent
  - Communicates with teachers, related services, and families
- What is Specially Designed Instruction v. Supports and Aids
  - Specially Designed Instruction directly addresses learning needs while supplemental aids and services support access and participation



# Now that my child has an IEP... (cont.)

- How often will we meet for an IEP?
  - IEPs must be held annually, but the team can reconvene at any time
  - Families or staff may request a meeting at any time
- How often will my child undergo a special education evaluation
  - Reevaluations must happen at least every three years
  - Families or staff may request earlier if there are significant changes or more assessments are needed to determine programming
  - Families or school may request a re-evaluation 1 year after the last evaluation



# What If I Disagree?

What if I disagree with the team decision or implementation?

1. Discuss concerns with your team to first try to resolve the disagreement
  - openly communicate your concerns and make suggestions
2. Request an Independent Education Evaluation (IEE) through the Director of Special Education
  - [Information Update Bulletin 99.01 – IEEs](#)
3. Participate in Mediation, usually through a formal process through DPI
  - [Wisconsin Special Education Mediation System \(WSEMS\)](#)
4. File a due process complaint if your concerns remain unresolved
  - [Wisconsin Due Process Complaint](#)



# Closing

- [Special Education Terminology and Additional Resources](#)
- If there are questions about multilingual learners, contact the bilingual resource teacher at the student's school
- If there are questions about special education, contact the building principal



**THANK  
YOU!**

**QUESTIONS??**